



**Homeland  
Security**

*Privacy Office, Mail Stop 0655*

May 17, 2019

**SENT BY ELECTRONIC MAIL TO: [foia@americanoversight.org](mailto:foia@americanoversight.org)**

Austin R. Evers  
Executive Director  
1030 15th Street, NW  
Suite B255  
Washington, DC 20005

Re: **2019-HQFO-00314**

Dear Mr. Evers:

This is the electronic final response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), dated January 24, 2019, and received by this office on January 25, 2019. You are seeking records reflecting any action taken by DHS related to the recommendations set forth in the April 2017 Government Accountability Office report titled, "Countering Violent Extremism: Actions Needed to Define Strategy and Assess Progress of Federal Efforts" for Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, Former Secretary John Kelly, Former Deputy Secretary and Acting Secretary Elaine Duke, any person communicating in the capacity of Chief of Staff to the Secretary of Homeland Security, and any other person communicating on their behalf, such as administrative assistants or schedulers, as well as, all DHS-based members of the Countering Violent Extremism Task Force (Date Range for Record Search: From 4/1/2017 to 1/24/2019).

A search of the Office of Chief Information Officer (OCIO) for documents responsive to your request produced a total of six pages. Of those pages, I have determined that three pages of the records are releasable in their entirety and three pages are partially releasable, pursuant to Title 5 U.S.C. § 552 (b)(6), FOIA Exemptions 6.

Enclosed are six pages with certain information withheld as described below:

**FOIA Exemption 6** exempts from disclosure personnel or medical files and similar files the release of which would cause a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. This requires a balancing of the public's right to disclosure against the individual's right to privacy. The privacy interests of the individuals in the records you have requested outweigh any minimal public interest in disclosure of the information. Any private interest you may have in that information does not factor into the aforementioned balancing test.

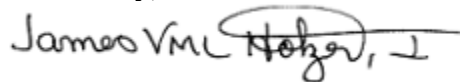
You have a right to appeal the above withholding determination. Should you wish to do so, you must send your appeal and a copy of this letter, within 90 days of the date of this letter, to: Privacy Office, Attn: FOIA Appeals, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 245 Murray Lane, SW, Mail Stop 0655, Washington, D.C. 20528-0655, following the procedures outlined in the DHS FOIA regulations at 6 C.F.R. Part 5 § 5.8. Your envelope and letter should be marked "FOIA Appeal." Copies of the FOIA and DHS FOIA regulations are available at [www.dhs.gov/foia](http://www.dhs.gov/foia).

Provisions of FOIA allow DHS to charge for processing fees, up to \$25, unless you seek a waiver of fees. In this instance, because the cost is below the \$25 minimum, there is no charge.

Additionally, you have a right to seek dispute resolution services from the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) which mediates disputes between FOIA requesters and Federal agencies as a non-exclusive alternative to litigation. If you are requesting access to your own records (which is considered a Privacy Act request), you should know that OGIS does not have the authority to handle requests made under the Privacy Act of 1974. You may contact OGIS as follows: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road-OGIS, College Park, Maryland 20740-6001, e-mail at [ogis@nara.gov](mailto:ogis@nara.gov); telephone at 202-741-5770; toll free at 1-877-684-6448; or facsimile at 202-741-5769.

If you need any further assistance or would like to discuss any aspect of your request, please contact the analyst below who processed your request and refer to **2019-HQFO-00314**. You may send an e-mail to [foia@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:foia@hq.dhs.gov), call 202-343-1743 or toll free 1-866-431-0486, or you may contact our FOIA Public Liaison in the same manner

Sincerely,



James Holzer  
Deputy Chief FOIA Officer

Enclosure(s): Responsive Documents, 6 pages

**Subject:** FYSA -- DHS Response to GAO Final Report "Countering Violent Extremism: Actions Needed to

	Define Strategy and Assess Progress of Federal Efforts (CVE)"
<b>Date:</b>	2017/06/01 16:40:28
<b>Priority:</b>	Normal
<b>Type:</b>	Note

All,

For your awareness, please see the attached finalized 60-day letter for the "Priority 1" GAO final report, "Countering Violent Extremism: Actions Needed to Define Strategy and Assess Progress of Federal Efforts" (GAO-17-300).

The audit was requested by Sen. Ron Johnson, chair of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, and Rep. Bennie Thompson, ranking member of the House Committee on Homeland Security (through the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence).

The final report made 2 recommendations related to CVE activities. DHS concurred with both recommendations. Thanks,

**Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office**

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Office of the Chief Financial Officer

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	GAO-OIG Liaison	(b)(6)	
<b>Sender</b>	(b)(6)		
<b>Recipient</b>	(b)(6)		

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**Sent Date:** 2017/06/01 16:40:26

**Delivered Date:** 2017/06/01 16:40:28



**Homeland  
Security**

June 1, 2017

Pursuant to the requirements of 31 U.S.C. Section 720, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is submitting this written statement on actions taken regarding the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommendations contained in its report, GAO-17-300, "COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: Actions Needed to Define Strategy and Assess Progress of Federal Efforts."

This letter provides a status update and is being provided to the following Members of Congress and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB):

The Honorable Michael T. McCaul  
Chairman, House Committee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson  
Ranking Member, House Committee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Jason E. Chaffetz  
Chairman, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings  
Ranking Member, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

The Honorable Ronald H. Johnson  
Chairman, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

The Honorable Claire McCaskill  
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Mr. Mick Mulvaney  
Director, Office of Management and Budget

If I may be of further assistance, please contact me at (202) 447-5890.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Benjamin Cassidy".

Benjamin Cassidy  
Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs



Pursuant to the requirements of 31 U.S.C. Section 720, DHS is submitting this written statement on actions taken regarding the GAO recommendations contained in its report, GAO-17-300, "COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: Actions Needed to Define Strategy and Assess Progress of Federal Efforts."

The report contained two recommendations with which the Department concurred. Specifically, GAO recommended that the Secretary of Homeland Security, in conjunction with the Attorney General, direct the CVE [countering violent extremism] Task Force to:

**Recommendation 1:** Develop a cohesive strategy that includes measurable outcomes for CVE activities.

**Original Response:** Concur. DHS, in partnership with the DOJ [Department of Justice], leads domestic CVE efforts across the Federal Government through the CVE Task Force. In October 2016, the White House issued an updated SIP [Strategic Implementation Plan] that responds to the current dynamics of violent extremism and reflects experiences and knowledge acquired since the 2011 release of the national strategy and corresponding SIP. The 2016 SIP provides specific objectives and the multi-tiered actions of Federal departments and agencies to synchronize and integrate whole-of-government CVE programs and activities. The CVE Task Force and DHS recognize that additional strategic-level performance documentation will improve coordination and collaboration tasks among partner agencies; define how cross-cutting tasks will be implemented, and how they will measurably contribute to achieving the federal CVE goals. The CVE Task Force is currently developing measurable outcomes to support and guide the development of performance, effectiveness, and benchmarks for federally sponsored CVE efforts.

The CVE Task Force plans to report on the implementation progress of the 2016 SIP to the White House Homeland Security Advisor in January 2018. Estimated Completion Date (ECD): January 31, 2018.

**May 2017 Update:** The CVE Task Force is identifying concrete outputs and outcomes consistent with the 2016 SIP. The CVE Task Force also conducted a literature review of assessment models for analogous disciplines, which will be used to refine short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes. The CVE Task Force is on track to report on the implementation progress of the 2016 SIP to the White House Homeland Security Advisor in January 2018. ECD: January 31, 2018.

**Recommendation 2:** Establish and implement a process to assess overall progress in CVE, including its effectiveness.

**Original Response:** Concur. The CVE Task Force and DHS recognize that establishing a process for assessing overall strategy success will drive an understanding of the contributions of individual activities in the federal CVE effort. While the Task Force will not be engaged in specific evaluation projects of its members or partners, the Task Force will support and guide the development of measures of performance, effectiveness, and benchmarks for federally sponsored CVE efforts. To develop a set of standard guidelines for CVE measurement and evaluation, the Task Force will consult with departments and agencies that have already invested in CVE

program assessment, namely the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the DOJ National Institute of Justice, and the DHS Science and Technology Directorate. Some of the CVE evaluation efforts undertaken by these agencies are still underway, but interim findings have been shared with the CVE Task Force regarding methodology and general areas of measurement. Based on this information, the CVE Task Force Research and Analysis team will develop and distribute summaries and resource guides to our federal and non-government partners. Overall, the long-term goal of the Task Force's engagement on CVE metrics is to develop an evidence based system in order to provide a meta-assessment of CVE programs, similar to other rigorous federal efforts to evaluate gang prevention programs or community policing initiatives.

As the current agency lead for the CVE Task Force, DHS is working with DOJ to synchronize and integrate CVE programs and activities to ensure successful implementation of this multi-agency collaborative effort.

The CVE Task Force plans to report on the implementation progress of the 2016 SIP to the White House Homeland Security Advisor in January 2018. ECD: January 31, 2018.

**May 2017 Update:** The CVE Task Force has begun consulting with departments and agencies that have already invested in CVE program assessment and is developing a research-based framework for designing and assessing CVE metrics. The CVE Task Force is on track to report on the implementation progress of the 2016 SIP to the White House Homeland Security Advisor in January 2018. ECD: January 31, 2018.